

## What is a State Heritage Areas Program?

State Heritage Areas (SHA) in a nutshell is people, historic preservation, recreation, conservation, unique landscapes/agricultural and/or natural areas, tourism and economic development, education and interpretation.

They are further defined by:

The SHA leverages public and private funding. It promotes collaboration across different “turfs”. It is a story-based historic preservation creating new avenues and support. The emphasis is on resources as heritage assets with multiple values and venues. Instead of the case-by-case approach of preservation that has been the standard for many decades, this is pro-active, community based, grounded in the commitment and involvement of the people that live, work and play there. Heritage tourism demands authenticity and active involvement of property owners, residents, businesses and governments. The national movement represents a fundamental change in the way Americans weigh the value and potential of their pasts and how they work together to conserve and enhance the stories, places and landscapes that define their sense of identity and pride in their community.

SHA are places where residents, property owners, non-profits, businesses, and governments work in partnership to enhance, conserve, interpret and promote the resources and peoples that define their region as a special place for the benefit of the present and the future. Heritage Areas seek to ensure that the past remains part of the living fabric of the community. They are also grass-roots efforts, not a top down state government endeavor.

SHA are linked by shared traditions, pasts, and stories that are reflected by the region’s cultural and natural resources. Without meaningful, inclusive stories and resources, a heritage area lacks a sense of place, a sense of the past, and a sense of identity and authenticity. Heritage areas have demonstrated abilities to enhance the quality and quantity of life through better recreation, new business opportunities, and greater economic activity. Community-Based Partnerships are the best way to blend the Story, the Community, and a Preservation Ethic into a worthwhile project

SHA are based on The National Heritage Areas Program through the National Park Service, which includes at present 40 National Heritage Areas. They are both large and small. The Program has respect for property owners and has varied management structures. There is no single payer, and no single authority. Different emphasis depends on regional interests and needs. It must be pointed out that the entire State of Tennessee is considered a National Heritage Area in regard to Civil War sites and preservation. Two smaller areas: The Cumberland Plateau, led by the Alliance for the Cumberlands (encompassing 19 counties) and the Tennessee Overhill Heritage Association (encompassing McMinn, Monroe and Polk Counties in SE TN) have both applied for NHA designation but to date have not been selected.